**Report of the**

**2013 Research Standards Focus Group:**

**Implementing Research Standards in Emergency Management Higher Education**

This document was prepared by Jessica Jensen on behalf of the focus group. Please direct comments or inquiries related to the focus group/report to her at [ja.jensen@ndsu.edu](mailto:ja.jensen@ndsu.edu) or 702-219-4293.

**Emergency Management Institute (EMI)**

**Emergency Management Higher Education Program**

**Research Standards Focus Group**

**August 14-15, 2013**

**Preface**:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Emergency Management Higher Education Program convened a focus group at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) September 26-27, 2012 to discuss a set of basic research standards for the emerging discipline of emergency management (EM). The charge of the group included discussion and debate related to methods standards, standards for publishing research including primary outlets for dissemination of EM research, and ethical guidelines for EM research. The group’s discussion led to the development of draft Research Standards for the Academic Discipline of Emergency Management. The standards were reviewed by the focus group and circulated among scholars for further review and feedback between September 2012 and July 2013.

A second focus group was convened to build on the work of the first August 14-15, 2013. Specifically, the group’s charge was to review the initial draft standards and, pending revision/acceptance of the standards, explore an implementation process for the standards. The following report:

1. Summarizes the group’s feedback on the initiatives to date to develop EM as an academic discipline;
2. Highlights key points related to the group’s discussion of the draft research standards; and,
3. Provides recommendations for how the Emergency Management Higher Education Program might continue to support the efforts of the emergency management higher education community to further enhance emergency management as an academic discipline.

Participants in the focus group included:

Jessica Jensen, North Dakota State University (Facilitator)

Shirley Feldmann-Jensen, California State University, Long Beach

Jack Rozdilsky, Western Illinois University

Claire Rubin, Claire B. Rubin & Associates, LLC

Robert Schwartz, University of Akron

Sandy Smith, Arkansas Tech

Gary Webb, University of North Texas

The participants acknowledge FEMA’s Emergency Management Higher Education Program for its continuing support of the emergency management higher education community’s work to develop as an academic discipline including the support of the 2013 Research Standards Focus Group.

**Report**:

The focus group began its discussion with the topic of the development of emergency management (EM) in higher education and its current disciplinary status. There was consensus among the group that EM is in the process of becoming an academic discipline in its own right. The group unanimously supported the disciplinary purview of emergency management as outlined in the *EM Disciplinary Purview Reports* (Jensen, 2012[[1]](#footnote-1), 2013[[2]](#footnote-2)). The reports suggest that emergency management is the scientific study of how humans and their institutions interact and cope with hazards, vulnerabilities, and resulting events and consequences. The group agreed that empirical research related to this purview ought to be viewed as the EM body of knowledge and that this body of knowledge ought to be the basis for educating students.

There was also consensus regarding the essence of the draft Research Standards for the Academic Discipline of Emergency Management. The group reviewed recommendations for modifications to the draft made by scholars leading up to the focus group and discussed and debated their own suggestions for modification. The group reached agreement regarding modifications that ought to be made to the standards.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Following this discussion, the group began to explore what will be needed to see the standards implemented by students, EM faculty, scholars who associate themselves with emergency management, and practitioners conducting EM research. A variety of significant challenges or obstacles to implementation were identified; yet, conversation quickly moved on to focus on potential facilitators for implementation. Toward that end, the group brainstormed what an overall implementation process for the Standards might look like. The process the group thought would be most effective in moving the draft standards from theory to practice is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**. From draft to official document: Steps in an ideal implementation process.

The group also brainstormed and later ranked issues that might be addressed/activities that might be completed within each step of the process. Appendix A presents the ranked list of what might be done to facilitate implementation at each step of the process.

Also discussed were several ideas that the group felt would benefit the overall development of the emergency management discipline that would also support research-related efforts. These ideas included the need for an academic professional association, an annual, scholarly journal focusing on “Teaching Emergency Management”, an emergency management research database, and social media platforms for discussion amongst emergency management scholars/educators. While the group believed each of these ideas would be of great value in advancing the academic discipline, group members agreed that development of a professional association ought to be the first priority. Should a professional association exist, it could potentially formally adopt and promote the Research Standards as well as begin an annual journal, house a research database, and sponsor social media platforms.

After identifying and ranking what might facilitate implementation at each step, the group split into small working groups to draft a one page Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet about the Standards, a letter to degree programs inviting review of the Standards, and a one page rationale regarding the need for an updated Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Higher Education Program research methods textbook. The one page rationale could also be used to approach book publishers with a pitch about why such a textbook is worth pursuing. The larger group reconvened and discussed the drafts of the documents, changes were recommended, and a group member took responsibility for making the changes, making contact with degree offering programs, developing a survey to gather feedback, and analyzing the feedback once received. It is anticipated that contact will be made with degree offering institutions in Fall 2013 and feedback accepted through the survey until Spring 2013.

The focus group made progress over the course of its two days of discussion; yet, much remains to be done if there is to be an increase in evidence-based education within EM programs and an increase in the amount and quality of EM research.

Toward that end, the FEMA Higher Education Program can support the work of the EM higher education community to bring about these changes in several areas including:

* Most academic disciplines rely on a combination of large databases (e.g., EBSCO, Project Muse, ProQuest, Sage, Web of Science, and the like) and disciplinary specific databases to provide significant citations/articles in response to queries. As previously mentioned, the large databases do not respond well to common EM keywords and there are no discipline specific databases to support the development of the EM discipline. Development of such a database would require significant financial, technical, and logistical support. The FEMA Higher Education Program could sponsor an effort to engage academics, FEMA EMI Learning Resource Center representatives/library specialists, and IT specialists to explore what would be required to develop such a database and to what extent such a database might be developed in the near future.
* Despite having vision and passion, many EM higher education programs do not have enough resources (e.g., dedicated faculty) to offer students the emergency management educational experience they might like (e.g., number of courses, range of courses, quality of courses, etc.). While many EM higher education faculty would agree that is important to educate students in how to analyze and use research and how to conduct research using accepted methods and techniques, the reality is that many programs cannot support the offering of another course. Thus, the FEMA Higher Education Program could help EM higher education by sponsoring the development of online interactive, self-paced undergraduate level AND graduate level research methods classes that would be easily and freely accessible to students in EM higher education programs around the country.
* Some EM higher education programs have sufficient faculty to offer an emergency management research methods class, but cannot find emergency management-focused research methods materials to support course delivery. Thus, the FEMA Higher Education Program could help those programs by sponsoring the development of such materials including sponsoring the revision and expansion of the already existing FEMA Higher Education College Course “Research and Analysis Methods in Emergency Management”.
* Scholars, faculty, students, and practitioners will need to become familiar with the final Standards for Emergency Management Research if the standards are to be met through research. The FEMA Higher Education Program could help EM higher education by sponsoring the development, offering, recording, and permanent availability of one or more webinars to introduce the EM higher education community to the standards once the document is finalized.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Appendix A. Facilitating implementation at each step of the process. | |
| *Building awareness within emergency management higher education and soliciting feedback* | |
| 1. | Develop a one page FAQ sheet regarding the standards |
| 2. | Develop and send letter to degree offering programs inviting review (include draft Standards and FAQ sheet) |
| 3. | Develop a survey to solicit program feedback on draft Standards (include link in letter referred to above) |
| 4. | Offer informational presentation on draft Standards in plenary session at the 2014 FEMA Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium |
| 5. | Offer one or more breakout sessions for feedback/discussion related to draft Standards following plenary session at FEMA Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium conference |
| 6. | Revise draft Standards as warranted based on feedback |
| 7. | When significant support for the standards has been voiced by degree offering programs, then further steps to increase awareness within EM higher education might include one or more FEMA Emergency Management Higher Education Program informational webinars, submitting an article to the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Bulletin, submitting an announcement to the IAEM Student Chapter listserv, sharing the standards with IAEM’s Training and Education Committee, and submitting an article to *Journal of Emergency Management/Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* regarding research issues, need for standards, and awareness of draft standards |
| *Asking for commitment from EM higher education* | |
|  | Send letter to degree offering programs asking for endorsement of the standards by appearing as a signatory program in an appendix to the Standards. Endorsement would indicate that the program will ensure that students and faculty follow the standards in their research and that faculty educate students regarding how to evaluate research and what constitutes a contribution of new knowledge in our discipline using the standards |
|  | Request that degree offering programs that endorse the standards also post a statement of commitment to the standards and a link to the standards document on their program websites (where applicable) |
| *Provide implementation support tools to programs* | |
| 1. | Develop and disseminate a guide for where to find scholarship and research related to the discipline’s purview that is organized in keeping with the draft Standards (i.e., sources of primary, secondary, and tertiary literature) to support faculty, student, and practitioner research efforts |
| 2. | Revise and update the FEMA Emergency Management Higher Education Program research textbook (done in 1999) and make it available to programs |
| 3. | Approach book publishers regarding the need for an emergency management research textbook (e.g., CRC Press, Butterworth Heinemann, John Wiley and Sons, Inc) |
| 4. | Develop and disseminate a guide for students on how to critically read a research article |
| 5. | Develop an interactive independent study research course regarding research methods to support those programs that do not have the resources to offer a methods course (Note: The group agreed the current FEMA Independent Study (IS) course is not sufficient for the needs of our community). |
| 6. | Develop and share a guide for degree programs as to how to integrate the Standards into coursework |
| 7. | Develop and share a document with examples of how the Standards have been successfully integrated in degree programs |
| 8. | Provide, in an accessible format/forum, examples of research that meet the Standards (i.e., thesis, dissertation, journal article, book chapter/book) |
| *Ongoing promotion of the Standards* | |
| 1. | Send letter to those journals identified in the Standards as the primary outlets for the dissemination for emergency management research requesting that they consider a) asking authors to meet the Standards within the journal’s author instructions/submission guidelines; b) linking to the Standards on their websites in the author instructions/submission guidelines; c) asking their reviewers to measure research quality against the Standards |
| 2. | Approach IAEM/National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) regarding the potential for the organization’s to offer an annual award for best emergency management thesis and dissertation |
| 3. | Approach IAEM/NEMA regarding the potential for the organization’s to offer one or more annual awards for empirical research publications (e.g., books, articles) |
| 4. | Explore other opportunities for contests/prizes related to quality research efforts, such as at annual professional conferences (e.g. state emergency management association conferences, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster conference) |
| *Generating external awareness of the Standards* | |
| 1. | Individual degree programs send announcements to their institutions newsletters/news sharing mechanisms regarding the development of the Standards within the context of the formalization of emergency management as an academic discipline and the adoption and implementation of the Standards within the institution. Provide degree programs a template announcement that they can modify and share as they see fit. |
| 2. | Send announcement regarding the Standards adoption and implementation efforts within the context of the formalization of emergency management as an academic discipline to publications such as the *Natural Hazards Observer* |
| 3. | Send letter to key professional organizations regarding the Standards adoption and implementation efforts within the context of the formalization of emergency management as an academic discipline and the relationship of emergency management to their profession. Include Standards and FAQ sheet |
| 4. | Offer presentations at the conferences of allied academic disciplines and professional organizations regarding the Standards adoption and implementation efforts within the context of the formalization of emergency management as an academic discipline and emergency management’s relationship to their discipline/profession |
| 5. | Send letter regarding the Standards adoption and implementation efforts to key disaster scholars. Include Standards and FAQ sheet |

1. Jessica Jensen drafted the *EM Disciplinary Purview Report* on behalf of the focus group that met at the EMI Campus in Emmitsburg, MD in September 2012. The report is available for review and download on the FEMA Higher Education website. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jessica Jensen drafted the 2013 EM Disciplinary Purview Report on behalf of the focus group that met at the EMI campus in Emmitsburg, MD in August 2013. The report is available for review and download on the FEMA Higher Education website. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Following the focus group, the agreed upon changes were made to the draft Standards document. The document was separated from the 2012 Research Standards Focus Group report and posted as a stand-alone document on the FEMA Higher Education Program website within the Theory and Research Section. This version of the draft Standards document is being used within the awareness building step in the implementation process. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)